

## **OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BREAU**

The events of the past two weeks have given all of us reason to think about what we believe in and what this country stands for. As Americans, we believe in personal liberty and freedom but we also recognize the rule of law. As individuals, we're proud of being independent and self-reliant but we're also grateful for the comfort and support of family and friends. And, as a society, we believe in the value of private enterprise but we know that government plays an important role in protecting our liberties and safeguarding the quality of our lives.

These traditional American values have carried us through difficult times before and will do so again. But today, as we continue the business of Congress and the work of this Committee, these traditional values are especially relevant to the issues before us. This is the third in a series of hearings through which we continue to examine the need for reform of our long-term care system. In one sense, the witnesses who appear here today will help us to do that by interpreting law, analyzing statistics and providing us with recommendations based on their professional and personal experiences. But, in a deeper sense, the message that they bring us also reflects traditional American values. Older Americans in every part of our country want to prolong their independence and freedom. They want to live in familiar community surroundings in the company of family and friends. To help them to achieve those goals, we need to build new partnerships that combine the resources of private enterprise and government. And we need to remember that the functional limitations associated with aging are a form of disability and that we can draw upon the independent living skills learned by individuals who have developmental disabilities or disabilities caused by chronic or catastrophic illness or mental illness.